

Improving access to sexual health services for young people aged 13 – 19: Assessing the impact of the introduction of Chat Health Messaging service

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Introduction:

Chat Health is a secure messaging service introduced to our clinical service in 2022 with the aim to improve sexual health access, support and education to young people [YP] aged 13-19.

Chat Health has been used as a pilot to recovery clinical services post covid-19 pandemic. This initiative aimed to assess the impact of Chat Health on YP access to sexual health services. Chat Health is co-ordinated by Advanced Nurse Practitioners who currently assess and support YP within the service. Chat Health is also occasionally used to engage vulnerable adults.

Methods:

YP activity, demographics and reason for using Chat Health for the period October 2022 - February 2023 were analysed. YP clinic attendances for a 5 month period pre and post the introduction of Chat Health was assessed (May 2022- September 2022 and October 2022- February 2023).

Results:

Pre Chat Health there were 246 YP clinic attendances, with 402 YP clinic attendances post introduction. 128 YP interacted via Chat Health and of those interactions 122 YP subsequently attended the service. Six YP used Chat Health to message but did not engage further or attend the service. 3% of YP using Chat Health were new to the service and used Chat health to register and subsequently attended the service. 97% of YP using Chat Health were existing patients and used Chat Health to discuss ongoing concerns with the following themes: contraception, STI symptoms, safeguarding, sexual assault.

YP ATTENDANCES

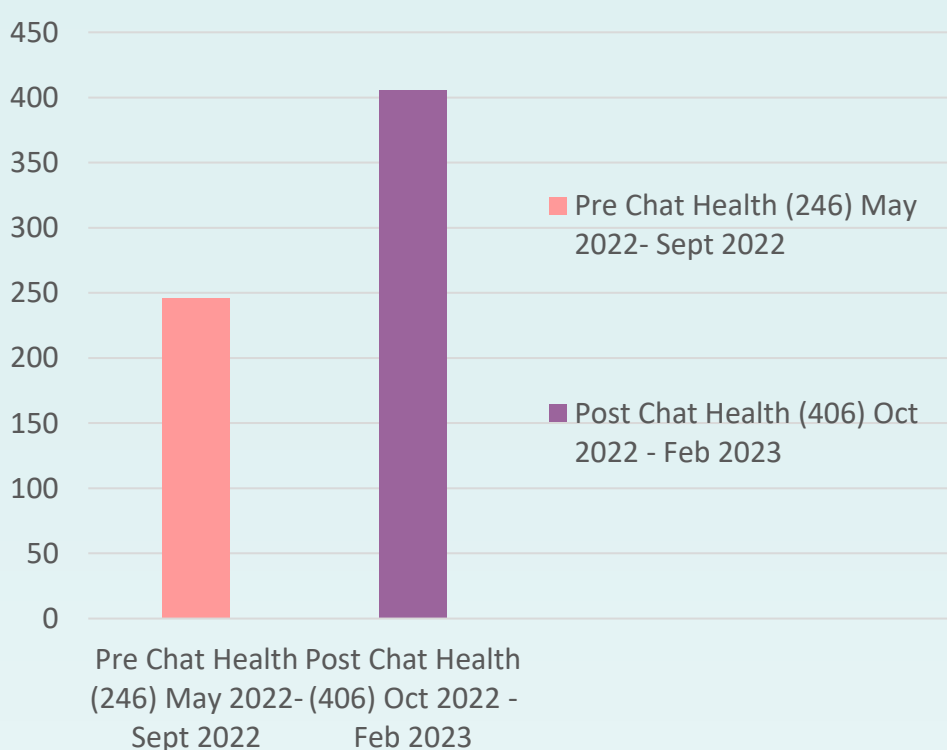


Figure 1: Bar chart showing the number of face to face appointments of patients aged 13-19

GENDER IDENTITY OF USERS

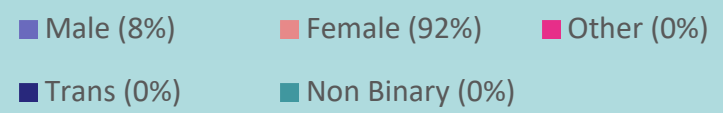
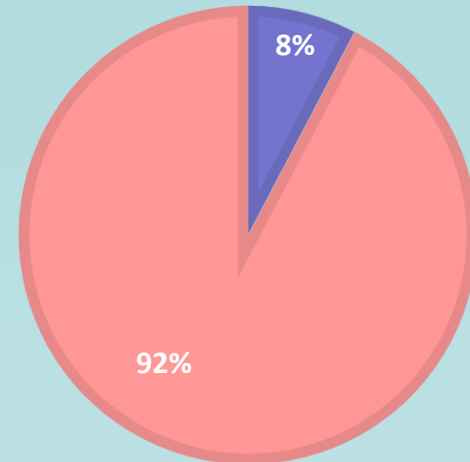


Figure 2: Pie chart demonstrating gender identity of YP using chat health



CONVERSATION THEMES:

- Contraception
- Safeguarding
- Sexual Assault
- Symptomatic
- Appointment questions

Discussion:

Since the introduction of Chat Health, there has been an 63% increase in 13-19 year olds attending our sexual health clinic compared to a similar 5 month period pre introduction. Our clinic experience has seen increased activity and widened YP's ability to engage with our sexual health service.

Chat Health has enabled YP already known to the service to address their sexual health and contraceptive concerns and coordinate their appointments.

Chat Health needs to be promoted more widely within the North West London Sector as a tool to engage YP who are not already accessing the sexual health services.

The vast majority of those messaging identified as female (91%). Chat Health needs to be promoted further within other gender identifying groups.